

New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

Land grabs

NEW INTERNATIONALIST EASIER ENGLISH
IELTS / ADVANCED READY LESSON

This lesson:



- 1) Reading** – about global issues and comparing simplified and original articles
- 2) Speaking** – discussing global issues – practice for the IELTS speaking exam
- 3) Writing** – practice interpreting graphs and writing 150 word summary for IELTS writing exam

What are the problems and solutions related to “land grabbing”?

a) discuss, then read and make notes from:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Land in Mozambique](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Land_in_Mozambique)

b) discuss again, then read the original article:

<http://newint.org/features/2013/05/01/smallholders-last-land-keynote/>

c) now compare the two articles and note down some new vocabulary



Where are the worst places for land-grabbing, and why?

Read and discuss the infographic on the next slide, or on this link (with zoom feature):

<http://newint.org/features/2013/05/01/land-grabs-hotspots-infographic/>

Hotspots

Some of the world's biggest and most controversial land deals.

IFPR Global Hunger Index 2012

- Extremely alarming
- Alarming
- Serious
- Moderate
- Low
- No data
- Industrialized country

ROMANIA Western Europe's backyard

6-10%

Foreign-owned farm land
Foreign firms register local companies to dodge a moratorium on land acquisition to non-nationals intensifying a rural exodus.

Emiliana West Rom 11,000 hectares CEREALS AND LIVESTOCK

Western Romania is on the doorstep of capital-rich European companies. Farmer association Eco Ruralis complains that smallholders feel they have no choice but to sell-up. Meanwhile, thousands of people have left the country to seek agricultural work elsewhere in Europe, often doing jobs like fruit picking. Emiliana West Rom, the main investor in the Banat region, acts as a 'representative' to Italian company Unigra. In 2001, it began acquiring land to cultivate cereals, and raise cattle, mainly for export. The farming operation stands accused of destroying forest, archaeological remains and disrupting the water supply. And while not all local people are opposed, many complain that Emiliana West has not respected contracts nor honoured promises for a share in financial revenue.

HONDURAS Home- grown grabbers

Not known

Foreign-owned farm land
Home to some of the most violent land rights conflict; domestic agribusiness is set on expanding palm oil estates.



Dinant

UP TO 22,000 hectares
PALM OIL

Global demand for palm oil has tripled over the last decade and Honduran elites do not wish to be left behind. There's a history here. Land seizures back in the 1990s generated a powerful counter movement for recovery of peasant farms in the Northern Aguan Valley. But since the 2009 coup, the small farmers have lost ground. In 2009, the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Financing Corporation, lent \$30 million to Dinant, a palm-oil company which controls thousands of hectares in the Bajo Aguan region. Conflicts over land between September 2009 and August last year, claimed the lives of 53 peasants, as well as resulting in kidnappings, beatings and forced evictions. A least nine farmers have been killed this year alone. The abuses have prompted the World Bank to order an audit.

Herakles Capital 73,086 hectares PALM OIL

One of the starkest examples of bio-fuelled land grabbing has got to be the Herakles plantation in South West Cameroon. It covers 73,086 hectares, of which about 60,000 are earmarked for palm oil. The government signed a 99-year lease in 2009 with SG Sustainable Oils Cameroon, which is owned by Herakles Capital, a New York-based venture finance firm. The project, on the edge of the Congo Basin rainforest, has sparked local opposition; the allocated land is home to 14,000 people, who claim that compensation and jobs have not materialized. Activists have suffered assault and imprisonment. Greenpeace USA has predicted that cutting down the dense natural forest would release up to 9.5 million tonnes of carbon. There are worries that the Herakles investment could be a test case, setting a precedent for the entire continent.

CAMEROON A test case for Africa

4%

Foreign-owned farm land
Cameroon is teeming with plantations of palm oil, destined for biofuel production.



The Global Hunger Index 2012 is calculated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), with partners Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.

CAMBODIA Voracious rubber barons

56%

Foreign-owned farm land
Investors work around the official 10,000 hectare limit on concessions by creating 'shell companies' to acquire adjacent plots.

CRCK 6,000 hectares RUBBER

Thousands of Kuy highlanders are fighting against the destruction of Prey Lang forest – the largest contiguous lowland evergreen stretch in Southeast Asia – by Vietnamese firm Chu Se Rubber Company Kompong Thom (CRCK). The murder of anti-logging activist Chut Wutty, who had campaigned to protect Prey Lang forest for many years, drew much international attention to their cause. CRCK is one of many companies in a booming sector accused of widespread illegal logging and human rights abuses. A recent report by activist group Global Witness exposed how government corruption enables companies like CRCK to grab vast tracts of land, flouting international laws. Sugar cultivation for export has also increased massively in recent years, prompting a wave of evictions.



ETHIOPIA Indian interests

10%

Foreign-owned farm land
The government has made 3.6 million hectares available for lease, using violence and intimidation.



Karuturi Global 100,000 hectares RICE, CORN, PALM OIL

In 2010, Karuturi Global, a Bangalore-based company, has leased 100,000 hectares in Western Ethiopia and plans to invest more than \$100 million in East Africa. In 2011, a Human Rights Watch report found that crops belonging to the local indigenous Anuak community had been cleared without consent in a Karuturi lease area in Ilea, Gambella. The Ethiopian state plans to resettle 225,000 people from the Gambella region, as part of a wider 'villagization' programme that will move over 1.5 million people. Indian companies – the biggest group of investors, jointly controlling over 600,000 hectares – have come under fire as Indian and Ethiopian civil society groups join to struggle for land rights, aided by policy thinktank, the Oakland Institute. In February 2013, communities met in New Delhi saying abuses were being committed under cover of 'South-South cooperation'.



AUSTRALIA Farmyard for Asia

11%

Foreign-owned farm land
Some 4.6 million hectares are now owned by overseas interests, with most capital come from Asia and the Middle East.

Beidahuang 30,000 hectares GRAINS

Although foreign land ownership is nothing new here, there are growing concerns about losing control of food production and resources. And not just from the conservative opposition – the Australian Greens are calling for a 'national interest test' and the government has proposed a foreign land ownership register. In early 2013, the Chinese state-owned Beidahuang announced it had scaled back plans to invest in Australia's grain industry complaining of 'negative media coverage'. However the company is not pulling out altogether. Heilongjiang Feng Agricultural, an arm of Beidahuang, reportedly paid \$52 million for 30,000 hectares in the Great Southern and Wheatbelt region in late 2012. But Australian companies aren't averse to grabbing – the country is eighth among the top 10 investors in land deals in the Majority World, one place behind China.



Written and researched by Amy Hall.

Sources: Australia Green Party, Eco Ruralis, Food First, Global Witness, GRAIN, Greenpeace USA, The Guardian, Human Rights Watch, LCHAO, Oakland Institute, Oxfam, Rights and Resources Institute, Transnational Institute.

Now look at the graphs on the infographic on the next slide (or on the link below, with zoom feature) – and discuss what they show:

<http://newint.org/features/2013/05/01/land-grabs-the-facts-infographic/>

LAND GRABS – THE FACTS

Land Grab =

A controversial large-scale land acquisition (= an area of land over 200 hectares) by a foreigner or 'outsider'. Can result in dispossession – often without compensation – of those who live there.

Land grabbed in the Majority World since 2000¹

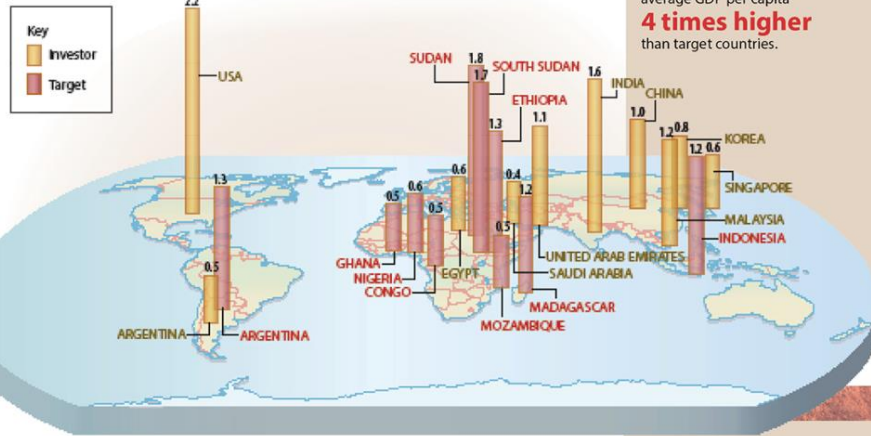
An estimated

50m hectares sold off globally in last 10 years

An area the size of a football pitch is acquired every second in the global South

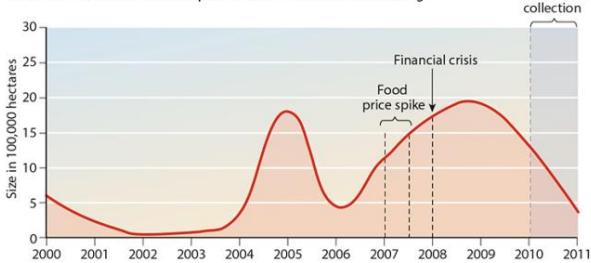
Top 10 grabber and target countries²

Reported international deals in millions of hectares



Rate of land acquisition

Deals have slowed since their peak in 2009 but are still continuing.¹



Weakest link³

In places where people are unable to assert their rights, deals can be agreed quickly and cheaply.

30% lower governance score, on average, in countries targeted by investors.

Who are the grabbers?

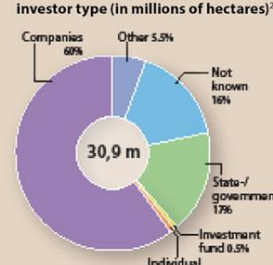
Foreign investors, national élites & neighbours...

32% of deals involve regional investors, 57% in the case of Asia¹

66% of demand for land from Gulf states is for offshore food production, mostly in Africa¹

Investor countries have an average GDP per capita **4 times higher** than target countries.

Breakdown of agricultural deals by investor type (in millions of hectares)²



\$14 billion

the amount of private capital committed to investment in agriculture⁴

Sweat the small stuff

There is a growing number of small-scale land acquisitions by élites in Africa.

95% of land investments in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are by nationals, with an average land size of 85 hectares.⁵

What's being grown?

Key commodities: vegetables, oil seeds, sugar cane, rice, maize and plantation forests.⁶

6 million

hectares of biofuels projects established in sub-Saharan Africa in the last 3 years¹⁰

Eightfold increase in palm oil cultivation in the last 20 years – predicted to double by 2020⁷

190 private equity firms are investing in agriculture and farmland⁸

High demand, high rates of failure

Only **25%** of deals have started production⁹

What grabbed land is used for (by%)

Food crops	28
Biofuels	19
Wood and fibre	11
Tourism	10
Land speculation	10
Mining	8
No information	5
Other agricultural commodities	3
Livestock	2
Industry	2
Renewable energy	1
Carbon sequestration	1

The hunger connection

Big land deals jeopardize food security.

2 billion people depend on smallholder farms for their food and livelihoods

Two thirds

of investments in agricultural land by foreign investors (2000-2010) were in countries with serious hunger problems³

of foreign investors' crops are destined for export³

75% proportion of Liberia's land allocated or promised to large investors in 2012⁶

24% proportion of Liberian children who are malnourished⁷

Empty land myth

The World Bank says Africa is home to more than half the world's available yet 'unused' land.⁸ But investors often seek occupied, fertile land, close to infrastructure.

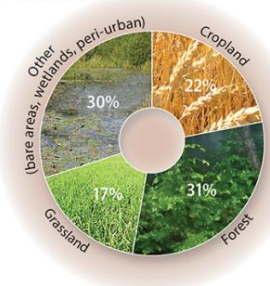
Of agricultural deals since 2000:

50%+ are for land less than a day trip away from the nearest city¹

20% are in densely populated areas¹

46% are on land formerly used for smallholder agriculture²

Land targeted for deals, by surface area¹



Push back

Recent years have seen a sharp rise in numbers of land activists being held, harassed, beaten or even killed.¹¹

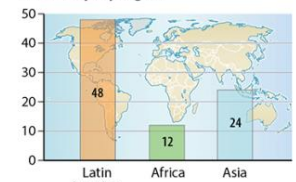
21 formal complaints brought against World Bank for investments that violate land rights, since 2008²

Securing tenure⁶
Legalizing community rights is a long, costly and difficult process.

31% of Majority World forests had community ownership or long term use rights in 2012

27 states recognize community and indigenous rights to land in law

Countries that offer full, secure land ownership, by region



¹ Land Matrix database, accessed March 2013. ² Patterns of large-scale land acquisitions; Paper Land Matrix preliminary data, April 2013. ³ Anseu et al, 'Transnational Land Deals for Agriculture in the Global South', April 2012. Analytical Report based on Land Matrix Database; landportal.info/landmatrix/ ⁴ IED, 'Farms and funds: investment funds in the global land rush', Global land rush briefing, January 2012. ⁵ Rights and Resources Initiative, 'Social and Environmental Impacts of Agricultural Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in Africa', March 2013. ⁶ Rights and Resources Initiative, 'Landowners or Labourers. What choice will developing countries make?' Annual Review, 2012-13. ⁷ IFPRI Food Security Portal ⁸ Deninger et al, 'Rising global interest in farmland – can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits?', World Bank, 2011. ⁹ Oxfam, 'Poor governance, good business', Policy Paper February 2013. ¹⁰ Action Aid, Africa biofuels database, February 2013. ¹¹ Global Witness, 'A hidden crisis? Increase in killings as tensions rise over land and forests', June 2012.

Writing:

Now choose one of the sections of the infographic and write (in pairs, or alone) a summary of what it shows – 150 words

Land deals in Mozambique

2.5 million

hectares
land granted
2004-2009

= **bigger**
than Wales

= 7%

of the country's
arable land

73%

for forestry
plantations

13%

for biofuels
and sugar

Over **1 million**

hectares went to
foreign investors

= **6 x size**
of London

0.8 hectare

= fullsize
football pitch